

Costa Rica gets dose of 'Patch' Adams medicine

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"Patch" Adams, the eccentric American doctor made famous in a movie starring Robin Williams, brought his brand of laughter-is-the-best-medicine therapy to Costa Rica this week to promote his view of "humanist health."

The 72-year-old—real name Hunter Doherty Adams—made an appearance on Tuesday at the country's top university, the University of Costa Rica, with his 30-strong troupe of clowns. A day earlier, they filed through a poor immigrant neighborhood in the capital San Jose.

He reiterated his message that the US-style health system lets down its patients by treating them according to income and social groups.

It's a message he and his group have been taking around the world for decades, while promoting unconventional medicine applied independently from big health insurance groups, and offering treatment in poor countries.

"It was obvious to me that our hospitals were horrible, they treated rich different than the poor, pretty different than the ugly—white different than black," Adams told hundreds of Costa Rican students.

"I realized I couldn't work in a hospital in the US. With the pay from one talk you could build a clinic or a school in poor countries, so that's what we do," he said.

Adams' offbeat life work and approach to medicine inspired the 1998 movie "Patch Adams" starring the late Williams.

Global fame has taken him to the lecture circuit around the world, proceeds from which finance his medical projects.

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